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A
S E R M O N
PREACHED
IN LAMBETH-CHAPEL,
AT THE
CONSECRATION
OF THE

Right Reverend FATHERS in GOD,

J O H N,
LORD BISHOP of LINCOLN;

And T H O M A S,
LORD BISHOP of BRISTOL;

On Monday, December 28, 1761.

/c

By PEIRSON LLOYD, M. A. Second
Master of *Westminster* School.

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Bishop of *Canterbury*.

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SEERMON

THE BAPTIST CHURCH

CONGREGATIONAL A-1110

THE BAPTIST CHURCH

JOHN

MEMBER OF THE CHURCH

AND THOMAS

THE BAPTIST CHURCH

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PHIL. II. 15.

—That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

THESE Words were originally addressed by St. Paul to the whole Body of Christians then in general; and with regard to them at that time, so remarkable was their Zeal and Integrity, that this Character of *shining as Lights in the World* might be applied to them in general with the greatest propriety. This expression however may admit of some little variation in sense, according as it may be differently rendered, either *Ye shine*, or *shine Ye*, as Lights in the World; but whether it be taken by way of Commendation or Exhortation, the Doctrine from the Text will be still the same,

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viz:

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viz. that, as Christianity affords better means of making men eminently good, irreproachable in the sight of God and Man, than any other Religion in the World can, so does it lay the strongest obligations upon all its Professors to become so.

Now that the first Christians were men of this conspicuous Character, is a matter of fact notorious and undeniable. And indeed how should it be otherwise? for their Religion was plainly the Religion of Reason and Conviction; not the effect of Authority, Prepossession, or Prejudice. Their Prejudices must have been all on the other side of the question, but being men of honest minds, they could not stand out against the Miracles wrought in defence of it; these carried sensible Demonstrations of a Supernatural Power along with them; and therefore, when the Workers of them declared, that they had received their Commission from God, they rationally concluded, that from God they must have received it; for God, as a God of Truth, could never set his seal to a Falshood. Thus were their
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Ears open to all the instructions, which should come from such inspired Teachers; and accordingly, as the Word of God found a free and easy admision into their Hearts, so with it did every Christian Grace and Virtue naturally take root, and grow up in them. But the main Foundation of all their Faith and Virtue was this, the late and incontestable Fact of our Saviour's Resurrection, which was a full confirmation of all, that He had ever said or taught; that He came from God; was the Son of God; of the same Divine Nature with Him, Himself very God; and consequently that, as He had raised Himself from the Dead, He was able to raise Them also, and from his Declarations therefore infallibly would. And this was a Foundation for their Faith firm and immoveable; by this were they enabled to encounter all Difficulties and Dangers; to withstand all Assaults and Temptations. With Heaven and Eternal Happiness in view, nothing in all Nature could have Charms enough to allure them from their Duty; nothing, no, not Death itself could

carry Terrour enough to force them from it.

And yet these men, eminent and exemplary as they were, did the Apostle advise to become more eminent and exemplary still; that they should be *blameless and harmless, the Sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they were to shine as Lights in the World.* Now these Words seem to respect their conduct chiefly with regard to Men; that, as their new Profession would certainly draw the Eyes of the World upon them, so their Characters should be able to stand the strictest Scrutiny; that, as they lived amongst Enemies, who would gladly catch hold of any handle for reproach, so they should be more than ordinarily cautious not to give any just one; that, as they were styled *Sons of God*, so they should assert their right to that Title by an unspotted Holiness of Life and Integrity of Manners; and by shewing in all their behaviour, that they exercised themselves to have a Conscience void of Offence, as well towards Man, as towards God. And these Cautions were no more than necessary; for

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for we find, that Disputes and Animosities began to spring up very early among them; partly from their addiction each to their several Teachers; partly from some mistaken Notions, that prevailed about the Nature of Christian Liberty, which some were unreasonably for contracting too much, and others as unwarrantably for extending too far; and probably from many other reasons, well known at that time, though not so easily to be assigned by us at this distance. Besides their Zeal (which is an active Principle, and apt therefore without great caution to overleap the bounds of Moderation) might prompt them now and then, even from a glowing sense of God's Honour, too much to disregard and despise the Tongues and Opinions of those about them; and to make them, so that they could but satisfy their own Consciences, in what they *did*, not to consult enough either the Times, the Occasions, or the Manner of *doing* it; in which yet the great Beauty of Holiness consists, and on which must depend too its chief influence and success. It might tempt
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them too, as they saw they were to expect no Countenance from the Civil Power, sometimes too unwarily to offend and exasperate it; and from an eagerness of bearing testimony to the Truth, instead of declining Danger (which without a proper Call is ever our Duty to do) too rashly to run themselves into the way of it.

With regard to us at this time, little caution, I fear, is necessary from any overflowing of our Zeal; in this respect it is certain, that we want much rather to be quickened than restrained; though were our Zeal ever so much more active and animated than it is, yet (blessed be God) we need be under no apprehensions upon that account; since it is our Happiness to live in a Country, where Christianity is the Religion profest, and has the Civil Authority on its side.

Now the reason of the difference in this particular between Us and the first Christians is plainly this, that They, as I said before, became Converts upon Conviction; whereas We are in a great measure Christians as it were by Birth, and the Custom of the Age
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and Place we live in; in which case, as we take up our notions hereditarily, so are we apt to examine them but superficially; contenting ourselves too much with the bare profession of our Religion, without giving ourselves the trouble thoroughly to search into the grounds of it.

But things ought to be otherwise; and this will be so far from being our Excuse, that it will but aggravate our Condemnation. The Sacred Oracles of Truth lie open before us, and be it at our own peril therefore, if we neglect to consult them. We have most authentic Records of those Miracles, which first ushered Christianity into the World; and which are the same to Us, as they were to the Eye-Witnesses of them, and will continue to be to all future Ages, undeniable Tests of the Truth of it. It is true, we do not see them performed as they did; we have not the same ocular demonstration, which they had; but we have all the proofs of them, which in the Nature of things matters of this kind are capable of; which, though not visible and sensible,
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are yet equally certain, as if they were. Besides we have other proofs in defence of Christianity, which must have been wanting to them; as namely the amazing Propagation of the Gospel, over so vast an extent of Country, and in so short a space of time; against all the Learning, the Power and the Malice of the World combined against it; by seemingly the weakest Means, and humanly speaking the most disproportioned Instruments; itself the greatest of Miracles.

We might appeal likewise to many Prophecies fulfilled, which of course must have been hid from those of former ages, and which could have been discovered only by their accomplishment; a Miracle this too, which manifestly bears the Divine Stamp upon it; for certainly to foreknow *future* Events must be the property of God alone, to whom all things are *present*.

And shall we then not search the Scriptures, which come thus authentically and miraculously attested to us? if we do not, we plainly prove it to be merely casual with regard to us, that we are not Jews, Mahometans

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metans or Infidels; and as to any Advantages from Christianity, we might full as well have been so.

But I hope for better things; that we shall all thankfully improve the happy Privilege of our Birth into all the Advantages, for which Providence designed it; that we shall not content ourselves with being Nominal Christians only, like Heirs to a Title without any substance at all to support it; but convince the World, that we are become Christians in deed and in truth, upon mature Choice and well-grounded Principles; by studying the Scriptures with that Assiduity, Attention and Zeal, which are suitable to their Worth and Importance. And surely no other System of Religion can deserve our care and attention so well; for no other can so fully instruct us in the knowledge, either of the Divine Nature, or our own; can prescribe so pure a Form of Worship, or so compleat a Rule of Practice; can afford such Assistances, or propose such Rewards. It is foreign to my present design, as, with regard to the Audience I am before, it

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would

would be needless to enter upon a laboured Proof of these points; the Truth of which must be evident to every one, who will form but the slightest comparison between Christianity and any other Religion in the World.

As to the Gentiles, who had nothing but the Light of Nature to direct them, and that too miserably diminished of its Original Brightness, it is no wonder, that their Worship should be so defective, when their Notions of the Deity were so depraved; they not only believed a Plurality of Gods, but likewise held many for such, who from their Lewdness, Intemperance and Cruelty would have been justly looked upon as Monsters even amongst Men. We may be sure that the Rites of their Worship were suited to the Objects of it; and what then must the Lives of such Votaries be expected to be? It is true indeed, the more Learned of them, and who by their Parts and Application had made a deeper search into Nature, discovered worthier Sentiments of God and his Attributes; but, though some of them pretty plainly appear to have believed but one Supreme

Supreme God; yet not any of them, no, not the best and wisest of them all, could free himself from the Idolatry of the times; but gave a strong Confirmation to it, by declaring at his death, that he had always worshipped the Gods according to the Usage of his Country.

With regard to the Jews, whose Religion came from Divine Inspiration, and was designed to be a Type of Christianity, and the Shadow of Heavenly things to come, one might have expected better things from them; but, as they had always been a *crooked* and *perverse* people, so they became every day more and more vitiated from the corrupt Doctrines and Practices of their Elders; who by their multiplied Traditions had well nigh rendered the Law of none effect, and buried as it were the Spirit of their Religion under the rubbish of Superstitious Rites and Carnal Ordinances. Besides the Sanctions of their Law were of a temporal Nature; and but dim in comparison was their prospect of the Immortality of the Soul and a future State of Rewards and Punishments,

which yet alone are strong enough to bind men to a constant and uniform course of Obedience, and which were never fully brought to light but by the Gospel.

As Christianity appears to this advantage, when compared with any other Religion, so will it appear to the same advantage still, if compared, as it is maintained by us of the Reformed Church in its genuine Purity, with the many Errors and Corruptions of the Church of Rome; wherein such Doctrines are publicly profest, as are contrary to the whole Tenor and Design of the Gospel; destructive of all the Principles of Piety, Justice and Charity; and injurious no less to the Honour of God and the Merits of our Redeemer; than to the Peace and Welfare of Society, and the common Rights and Liberties of Mankind. Nor indeed can it well be accounted for otherwise, how any People should be held in so slavish a Subjection to such absurd and impious notions, than by their being debarred the free Use of the Scriptures, and by having their Service locked up from them in an unknown Tongue.

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But this is very far from being our Case. With Us all the Offices of the Church are performed in our Native Tongue; and therefore, as the Service itself is reasonable, so may we all rationally bear a part in it. Besides the free use of the Scriptures is not only allowed but enjoined us; and every one, who can read, may *there* see with his own Eyes the whole Mystery of his Redemption laid open to him; may *there* learn, how man was originally formed, from what a State he fell, and by what means he was restored; how his reconciliation with God, and the Pardon of his Sins (which of himself he could never have been entitled to, could never have had any solid grounds to hope for) were effected by the all-sufficient Merits of God Incarnate dying for him; may *there* behold in one view the most perfect Rule of Life, whether regarding God, his Neighbour, or himself, laid down in the plainest manner, and illustrated by the brightest Example, even that of our Saviour; together with the Promise, of the Divine Grace, to assist him in his Duty; and of Everlasting Happiness,
to

to reward him for it. The Consequence of all which is plainly this, that Christianity obliges its Professors to excel all other Men as much in the Purity of their Lives, as That excels all other Religions in the Purity of its Doctrines.

Indeed for what end else could God be supposed, either to vouchsafe us the Light of the Gospel, or to permit his blessed Son in our Nature to suffer for us? It was doubtless for this, to shew his Hatred to Sin, and Love to Mankind; to abolish the One in order to save the Other. This is the Doctrine of every Page almost in the Gospel; to this all its Precepts, all its Promises, and all its Threatenings tend.

This saith St. Paul is a faithful saying and
 1 Tim. i. 15. *worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners.* Here is plainly declared the gracious end of our Saviour's coming; but how to save them? why by freeing them, as we are elsewhere taught, from the guilt and dominion of sin; for for this purpose was the Son of God manifested,
 1 Joh. iii. 8. *that he might destroy the works of the Devil.*

Devil. But the Doctrine and Terms of our Salvation are no where more fully declared to us than in Tit. ii. 11, &c. *The Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present World; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Where we may observe, that all the hopes we can have from the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ depend on this condition, that we live righteously, soberly and Godly in this present World; Christ gave himself for us for this very purpose, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; if therefore we still continue obstinate in the practise of it, we defeat, what we can, the end of Christ's first coming; and how then can we expect any Advantages from his Second?

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I shall not think it needful to recite any of the Precepts of the Gospel, which are plain and obvious to all; or to enlarge on its Promises, which the meanest Christian, that ever looked into the Gospel, must perceive to be all conditional;—that the Divine Grace is to be expected only in aid of our own best Endeavours;—that Christ's Merits are available only in conjunction with a sound Faith;—and that Happiness is annexed only to a life of unfinning Obedience, or at least to an unfeigned Repentance.

As to the Godly alone all the Promises of the Gospel are made, so against the Ungodly are all its Threatenings denounced; so that, as the greater will be our Reward, if we punctually perform God's Will; so the heavier will our Punishment be, if we wilfully transgress it; Eternal the Reward, and Eternal the Punishment.

I need not sure add, that our Obligations increase in proportion to our Knowledge; and that many things, which would be past by uncensured or unnoticed in a poor and illiterate Christian, would reflect a Shame and

and Dishonour upon those of sounder Sense and more improved Capacities. It might justly be expected from them, as they are better Judges of the fit Times and Seasons, the due Force and Propriety of Action, to set every Virtue off in its fairest Light, and to make Religion appear every way amiable. Where to superior Knowledge is added a superior Rank and Eminence in Life, there the Obligations become stronger still; that such, whose Examples will have a great and extensive influence, may for that reason make their Examples as useful as possible; and endeavour to be an Honour to Religion, as Religion will certainly be an Honour to Them.

But of all men living it doubtless behoves the Clergy most to excel both in the Knowledge and the Practice of their Duty; indeed it would be doubly criminal in Them to be defective in either. They have in a peculiar manner dedicated themselves to the Service of God; and accordingly, as their Function exempts them from the hurry and fatigue of secular Employments, they have the more

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leisure to attend to, and must be therefore self-condemned, if they neglect, the grand concerns of a better life. Besides unto them are committed the Oracles of God; nor can true Faith and sound Morals be long preserved amongst any People but by the united influence of their Learning and Example.

Very different is the Case of the Preachers of the Gospel now from that of the first Publishers of it. They were actuated (and necessary it was, that they should be actuated) by Divine Inspiration; but God, having once established the Gospel by Miracles, left it to be supported afterwards by the more ordinary methods of Grace, and the joint use of Reason and Learning. And surely no common pains are requisite to qualify a man, to understand the Scriptures in their Original Languages; duly to compare the Old and New Testament together, and to see how they mutually confirm and illustrate each other; to acquaint himself with the History of those early times, and the particular Errors and Objections, which the Apostles had then to combat; accurately to explain each Christian Doctrine,

Doctrine, and rightly to state the bounds of each Christian Duty; by all honest Arts of Address to infuse knowledge into the Ignorant, to comfort the Afflicted, to confirm the Wavering, and to satisfy the Scrupulous; by the Terrors of the Lord to reclaim those, whose Lives are a Scandal to our Religion; and by solid Arguments to refute those, who professedly set themselves against it.

It is not indeed to be expected, that every one, who is called to the Ministry, can have either Opportunities or Abilities sufficient for all these Qualifications; but it is certainly the Duty of every one to be possess of as many of them, as he can; and of those who can, to be possess of them all; and (for the credit of our Profession be it said) it would not be difficult to point out many, that are.

But it is a good Example at last, that must crown all other Qualities. Without this all the Learning in the World will be to little Purpose, and the best Preaching prove but as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal. The force of our Doctrine will depend upon the tenor of our Lives; and have a greater or less

influence upon others according to the influence it shall appear to have upon ourselves. A Preacher of Righteousness will naturally be expected to practise it too; and if he does not, the reproach, that falls upon him, will not rest there; but be turned by many to the discredit of his Function; by many to the discredit of Christianity itself. Great reason therefore have we to follow the Apostle's

Col. iv. 5. Advice in *walking in Wisdom toward them, that are without*; and to copy his Example,

1 Theff. ii. 10. in *behaving ourselves holily, justly, and unblameably among them, that believe*. Now

by this unblameable Sanctity mentioned both here and in my Text, the Apostle can never be thought sure to mean any Preciseness or Singularity of Carriage; much less any supercilious and unfociable Severity of Life; which would tend rather to disparage Religion than to recommend it; on the contrary perhaps, in general to comply with the World in things indifferent would be the likeliest means to give us a Weight and Authority in those things, wherein it is our Duty to oppose it. In short, how strenuous soever we ought to

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be in maintaining all the great Articles of Christianity; and how strict soever in conforming our own Lives to the Rules of it; yet should we be ever easy, humble and affable; candid, benevolent and charitable to all men. Even there, where we are obliged by our Office to reprove, rebuke or exhort others, we should still do it in such a manner, as to shew, that we are Friends to the Men, while we are Enemies to their Vices; and, with regard to those, whose Principles and Sentiments are most opposite to our own, we should yet differ from them with temper, like Men, and like Christians. So shall we cut off all occasion, at least all just occasion, of reproach; prove ourselves to be, as far as it is possible for us to be, *Sons of God without rebuke*; and effectually answer the Character of *shining as Lights in the World*.

A more particular Application of what has been said might reasonably be deemed as unnecessary to men of the first Stations in the Church, as it would certainly be unbecoming from one of mine. Instead therefore of reciting any of the Episcopal Duties and Qualifications,

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fications, which St. Paul in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus hath so largely described, I shall conclude this Discourse with beseeching Almighty God, that, as He hath of his infinite Mercy favoured Us of this Nation with the knowledge of the purest Religion upon Earth, so it would please him to raise up a continual succession of men duly qualified for the Administration of the same, under whose Guidance and by His Blessing it may be preserved pure and unfulled to the latest Posterity; and to this end may God so direct his Majesty, that He may appoint always such Persons to the Government of the Church, as by their Learning, Wisdom and Piety may be able to do most Credit to Him; and most Honour to That Faith, of which He is not only the avowed Defender by his Title, but also (what may he long very long continue to be) an illustrious Ornament by his Example.

Now to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Glory, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now and for evermore.

F I N I S.